REPORT

ON

Survey at Bay of Exploits

By

JAMES P. HOWLEY, F.G.S.

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St. John's Feb. 25th, 1887.

The Hon. Surveyor General.

SIR,—

I beg to submit the following Report, with the accompanying plan of my last season's field-work in the Bay of Exploits, for the information of the Government.

During the last Session of the Legislature, a Bill for the Encouragement of Agriculture and the setting apart of certain tracts of country as agricultural districts for the carrying out of the provisions thereof, having been passed, I was referred to as to the most suitable localities for the establishment of such settlements as the Bill contemplated. The object being to combine small farming with fishing, and the exigencies of the people necessitating action with as little delay as possible, I was naturally led to recommend those parts of our sea-coast where good lands were known to exist, but, at the same time, removed as far as possible from the baneful influence of fogs and cold winds, while still within easy reach of the neighboring fishing-grounds. These considerations induced me to point out some of the deeper arms and indentations of our principal Bays where such conditions prevailed. Amongst the latter, the beautiful Bay of Exploits, in Notre Dame Bay, seemed especially adapted for the purpose. Its fine, clear atmosphere, excellent soil, and abundance of timber; its great extent of seaboard available for settlement; and above all, its proximity to the Shore and Labrador Fisheries, render it decidedly the most desirable locality on the Eastern side of the Island. The Government were pleased to accept these considerations, and I was accordingly instructed to proceed thither and make the necessary surveys.

Our party, consisting of eight men, two chainmen, and an assistant, Mr. Albert Bayly, arrived at Dominion Point on the 24th of June last, and no time was lost in commencing the actual work

of the survey. Previous to leaving St. John's a good boat was provided for the coast survey, and others were hired, as required, during the progress of the work. Knowing, from former experience in the locality, that the Bay had been very imperfectly surveyed heretofore; in fact, that nothing beyond a mere sketch-map represented this important inlet upon our best charts: it was deemed necessary as a preliminary work, to make a thorough trigonometrical survey of the entire Bay. A suitable place having been selected on the south side of Norris Arm for the measurement of an accurate base line, and frequent observations having been taken to establish a true meridian, the work of triangulation was soon fairly commenced, and was continued throughout the month of July and part of August. Every feature of the coast-line, with its various arms, coves, islands, &c., was carefully brought in. The triangulation was connected with the Admiralty Survey of Staff-Commander Maxwell, R.N., at Northern Head and Exploits, Burnt Island, and on the eastern side it terminated at South Head. When the whole work has been projected on a large scale, I have reason to believe the result will be found a most useful and valuable addition to the manuscript-maps in the Department.

The latter part of the season was entirely devoted to the running out of Township lines and blocking off, into suitable sized farm-lots, all the available land towards the head of the Bay; the boundaries and location of all lands already granted or occupied, being, at the same time, determined. Every mile or section where not claimed, having a frontage on the shore, is now divided into eight lots, numbered from right to left, and each ten chains in width. A road allowance of one chain wide is reserved at every North and South section line, and each alternate East and West section line. All side lines and back lines of lots run either North and South or East, and West true; consequently, they are all at right angles, and there can be no conflicting of boundary lines hereafter if the system is adhered to. At the corners of every lot, posts were driven down, upon which the number, section, township and range was legibly written in red: corresponding numbers, &c., indicate each lot on the accompanying plan. Altogether, 172 lots, averaging a little over 18¼ acres each, or a total of 3,130 acres, were thus staked off, and are now ready for immediate occupation. Though apparently intricate at first sight, the system

adopted is of the simplest possible nature, and will be found greatly to facilitate the issuing of Grants in this locality. The intending settler need not necessarily be acquainted with the meaning of any of the terms used; having selected a lot which he wishes to obtain a Grant for, he need only make a correct copy of the No., Range, Township and Section, as marked on the corner-posts, and present the same to the Crown Lands' Department, where the exact locality, boundaries, area, &c., are at once seen by reference to the plan. The survey of these lands is dependent upon, and made to conform with, the general system of Township Survey, commenced in 1882. During that season Mr. Harvey and myself ran out a standard meridian, and a base line, on a parallel of latitude further up the country. The former divides the country into two portions, East and West; the latter into a North and South division. Every six miles East and West of the standard meridian is a range; and every six miles North and South of the principal parallel is a Township, denominated North or South, East or West, according to their respective positions. Consequently, the land laid off the past season is all included within Townships 1 and 2, North Ranges V, VI, and VII, East.

The character of the soil in this locality varies considerably. It is, for the most part, an arrenaceous loam, with occasional patches of marsh and interval lands. Though not of first-class quality, it is, nevertheless, all fairly good, especially the patches of interval. There are places where the soil is much encumbered with boulders, but when the latter are removed, good crops can be raised here as elsewhere. This was clearly evidenced on the farm of one John Gill, lot No. 7, Section 1, Township 2, North, Range VI, East. The industry and perseverance of this individual has resulted in the possession of a comfortable home for himself and family, with a plentiful supply of the necessaries and even many of the luxuries of life. Although not a farmer in the true sense of the term, and being very deficient in the supply of proper farming implements and accessaries, he has, nevertheless, managed, by dint of hard labor, to bring under cultivation some eight or ten acres of wilderness, which supplies him with abundance of vegetables, and hay for his cattle. He has his own beef, pork, poultry, eggs, milk, butter, &c., and raises an average of 250 brls. potatoes annually, which he can readily dispose of at a good price

to the inhabitants of the outer Bay. The abundant timber supply of the surrounding forests occupies his time in winter, the produce of which considerably augments his income, which he informed me was much over £100 per year. Another man named Porter, who also derives his chief support from the land, is equally prosperous. These are but a few examples of what may be accomplished even in a crude way, by persevering industry applied solely to the land. The potato crop invariably does well here, rarely ever fails, and such pests as the wireworm and potato bug are entirely unknown. Capt. James Winsor, on his extensive clearing at Dominion Point, has in a more thorough manner, demonstrated what the capabilities of the soil are. His crop of hay, oats, barley, turnips and potatoes were all very fine. Barley of good grain was fully ripe in August. He also exhibited a good grain of wheat, which he asserts, can be successfully raised every year, as he has proven by actual experiment. His kitchen-garden displayed a magnificent array of peas, carrots, parsnips, lettuce, cabbages, beet, onions, vegetable marrows, and other ordinary garden root crops, all of which were as fine as I have ever seen in any part of the country. All these facts, taken together, leave no room for doubt as to the natural capabilities of the soil under fairly skilled management. The indigenous growth of forest trees amply testifies as to the general character of the great unreclaimed region surrounding the shores of the Bay hereabout, and extending along the banks of the Exploits River for many miles up its course. There is little to add respecting this region of the country, except as to climate. During the early part of last season the weather experienced was rather wet and stormy, accompanied by frequent thunder and lightning; but the heavy easterly and northerly gales which were so injurious outside, and so greatly retarded fishing operations, had little or no damaging effect up the Bay. Fogs, such as are experienced along the sea-shore, never reach up here, and for the greater part of the season, the days are extremely bright and warm. During the latter part of the season, especially in the months of October and November, the weather was simply delightful, even exceeding that experienced on a former occasion. (See Report for 1882).

One good effect of the survey was to create an interest in the land and an impetus to cultivation amongst the settlers here,

where heretofore little manifested itself. All those already settled down became most anxious to acquire titles to their holdings. Enquiries were constantly made as to the terms upon which the land could be obtained, and several applications were sent on during the summer. Some twelve or more lots on the South side of Northern Arm were no sooner staked off than they were immediately sought after by families just arrived from the French Shore, which latter place they were obliged to abandon. Late in the autumn, the people of the outer Bay began to flock up here in their boats and craft for timber. Some of these people came several miles in an open punt, and in the height of a gale of wind, to find out my camp and make enquiries about applying for land, etc. A few of the Nova Scotian lumbermen employed at the Dominion Point saw-mill, being anxious to settle down here, applied to me for information, and upon my recommendation, began to clear some vacant lots in Peter's Arm before we left. On former occasions, as in the Codroy Valley and St. George's Bay, I have seen similar indifference towards utilizing the land all at once give place to a most lively interest and activity on the part of the people as soon as they found the Government disposed to help them along, and itself exhibit a well-founded belief in the value of the lands by sending surveying parties to block them off. After the experience of this and former occasions in the Exploits Valley, I cannot for a moment doubt that the region is destined in the future to become the home of a large and thriving population. There is no possible reason that I can see why it should not be capable of supporting many thousands of our people. Of course, before any extensive settlement can take place, roads must necessarily be constructed, so as to utilize the lands in the rear, and up the river valley. I have indicated on the plan some of the most necessary roads at present required. A main line extending from Northern Arm across to Peter's Arm, thence to Dominion Point, Wigwam Point, and finally along the west side of the main river, appears to me the first desideratim. Another line from Norris Arm to Burnt Arm and Kite Cove would open up a large tract of land, and prove extremely useful to the large population in the latter locality. A line extending from the head of Norris Arm to Burnt Bay, a distance of some twelve miles through a good piece of country, would connect the settlements in that direction, viz.: At Burnt

Bay, Loon Bay, and Comfort Cove with those of the Exploits, and undoubtedly prove a valuable means of intercommunication between these now isolated settlements.

Towards the close of the season, a sad and fatal accident, resulting in the drowning of Mr. William Emerson, the assistant chainman of the party, for a while threw a great cloud over the whole staff, and greatly retarded the operations of the survey. The particulars of this sad occurrence having already been made public, it is unnecessary to detail them now; but I cannot omit remarking here that the art of swimming should be fostered and encouraged amongst our youth of all classes. It is really astonishing that for a sea-faring population like ours, so very few learn to swim. I am fully convinced that one half the annual deaths by drowning are attributable to this cause.

In conclusion, I have only to reiterate what has already been so frequently put forward, that such districts of country as the present Report refers to, if put in a proper condition for settlement, with a thrifty and industrious class of people introduced thereon, cannot fail to become an acquisition of prosperity and happiness to the settlers themselves as well as a valuable asset to the country at large. In this connection, I beg most respectfully to suggest that no time should be lost next year in carrying out the provisions of the Agricultural Bill relative to the introduction of such settlers in this region, thus rendering its practical application apparent, and not allowing it to remain a dead-letter on our Statutes.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed), JAMES P. HOWLEY, F.G.S.

THE HON. ALFRED PENNEY, M.H.A.,
Surveyor General.